

**The Bachelor Degree Programme in English at the Military Wing of
Mu'tah University in Jordan: Objectives, Obstacles, and Proposed
Solutions: An Evaluative Study**

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Abstract

This paper examines the English degree programme taught at The Military Wing of Mu'tah University in Jordan in combination with the military and the police theoretical and practical training programme. This programme is examined with respect to the following issues:

- a. Method of selecting the programme's cadets-intake and the consequences of its defects on the graduates and on the quality and quantity of teaching and assessment.
- b. The degree to which the programme has been successful in providing its graduates with the type and the amount of knowledge and skills that a typical English major should minimally possess.
- c. Problems facing the cadets and the implementation of this joint academic-military programme.
- d. Prospects and proposed solutions for these problems as envisaged by the cadets and by the teaching staff.

The paper recommends adopting a short term reform plan and a long term reform plan for the programme and for the Military Wing as a whole.

Keywords: Jordan, Mu'tah University, The Military Wing, The Civilian Wing, army cadets, police cadets, the Bachelor degree programme in English, joint academic-military programme

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Previous Research

The areas of research that are related to the topic discussed in this paper include:

1. English teaching programmes in military universities
 2. Performance of Arab armies
 3. English teaching in Jordan
- 1. English teaching programmes in military universities:** Teaching English to military and police cadets in a study plan leading to the bachelor degree in English language and literature at a military university is a recent experiment which has rarely, if ever, been explored in applied linguistics research. One reason for this noticeable shortage of attention in literature to this type of programmes is the fact that this type of joint academic and military course plan appears to be a Jordanian model that, to the best of the author's knowledge, has not yet been duplicated anywhere in the world. A second reason is that military universities around the world do not seem to be identical in terms of their missions, their students' intake, and their study programmes. For example, while Mu'tah University consists of two wings, one military, which provides academic education and military training to military cadets, and the other civilian which provides academic education to civilian students, the American Military University provides a wide range of academic programmes to mainly military personnel, and its aim is to make education "affordable to "those who serve" i.e. those mainly affiliated with military or security institutions as the statement of its mission indicates:

EDUCATING THOSE WHO SERVE: AMU students are active, working adults in the military, public safety and national security sectors, and beyond. Founded to provide relevant and affordable education to the military, AMU today serves a variety of students seeking liberal arts and professional studies degrees, and we place special program emphasis on programs in homeland security, national security, intelligence, and emergency and disaster management.

Besides, the dearth of literature addressing this type of programmes in a Military university such as Mu'tah University is ascribed to the fact that the bachelor degree programmes in English language and literature, historically speaking, have evolved and have flourished in civilian universities. This is not to say that military institutions have not had any role in foreign language teaching and learning programmes. On the contrary, the role that certain military institutions have historically played in promoting, and in pioneering foreign language teaching programmes and foreign language teaching methods is well documented. For example, the role of the American military institution in promoting the audiolingual method of foreign language teaching during World War II is very well known in the history of methods. Richards and Rodgers (2001:50-61) provide a detailed historical survey of the role of the American military institutions in promoting the audiolingual method and in exploiting it for teaching foreign languages for military purposes.

Moreover, foreign language teaching, particularly English teaching programmes to speakers of other languages have been established in many military institutions around the world and have mainly taken the form of ESP courses. By contrast, the English programme at Mu'tah University, which is investigated in this paper, is a fully-fledged bachelor degree programme, which is taught along with military training courses and practical military training, to individuals who will serve as army and police officers upon completion of the four-year study programme in English and military science for the army cadets, and English and police science for the police cadets. This new experiment of combining an English degree programme with military and police degree courses and practical training represents a special experiment in foreign language education which has not yet been adequately investigated.

Research into English programmes at military institutions, which to some extent relate to the English programme at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University, may be exemplified here by studies that investigated some aspects of English teaching programmes in Arab and Muslim military and security institutions. In this area, Alqurashi (2011: 844) examined the motives for learning English among a group of Saudi police officers who enrolled in an English programme. This study also discussed the problems facing the implementation of this programme, and it identified several problems including sharp individual differences among the students enrolled

in terms of educational levels and English language proficiency. The location of the programme and the lack of proper facilities were also identified as major problems. Zafarghandi (2012: 25) investigated the motivation for learning English among 34 Iranian military personnel and found that while "non-negative attitude towards English and English learning" was the norm among them, they were dissatisfied with what he calls "organizational influence" which basically refers to the attitudes of the subjects' unit commanders towards the importance of learning English and the lack of "sources of English" at the workplace. These studies indicate that the importance of English is recognized not just by the political regimes, which may sometimes do so for their own self-motivated purposes, but also by individuals in the various sectors for various personal purposes. The studies also indicate that while most military personnel are typically motivated to learn English, the conditions for learning this language in military institutions in the Arab and Muslim countries that have been investigated are not generally favorable.

2. **performance of Arab armies:** Another area of research that relates to the topic of this study consists of studies that have investigated the efficiency and the poor quality of performance exhibited by Arab armies in war as well as in peace. In this context, De Atkine (1999:) provides a list of defects in Arab armies that he thinks cripple military commanders and inevitably cause failure in the battlefield, and-as experience has shown-lead to failure of plans and projects in peacetime:

Decisions are highly centralized, made at a very high level and rarely delegated... Bringing attention to oneself as an innovator or someone prone to making unilateral decisions is a recipe for trouble.. As in civilian life conforming is the overwhelming societal norm; the nail that stands up gets hammered down. Orders and information flow from top to bottom; they are not to be reinterpreted, amended, or modified in any way... Methods of instruction and subject matter are dictated by higher authorities.

This accurate description of some of the most serious problems facing military commanders in Arab armies is relevant to the context of the Military Wing at Mu'tah University, which is the focus of this study, in the sense that the root causes of some of the most serious problems and setbacks facing the English programme at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University

can easily be traced back to the lack of trust, and to the fear of innovation and creativity that the head and the members of the military administration of the Military Wing are conditioned to exhibit in order to professionally survive as long as possible in military service. This style of running military units and institutions simply means that the best and the safest course a commander can take is to keep things functioning as they are and to avoid introducing changes and improvements that will advance the institution.

The author had a first-hand encounter with the situation described here at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University through his attempts to reform the process of selecting military cadets for the bachelor degree programme in English. This happened in 1993 when the author was working as the coordinator of the English Language programme at the Military Wing and when he attempted to advise the former vice-president for military affairs to apply a more effective selection system for the English major intake which would rely on standardized tests. That vice-president reacted by simply asking the author to leave the process of selecting the intake for him and for his military team. And when the author complained to him about the presence of many cadets among those majoring in English who were incompetent for this major, and whose presence was counterproductive to the programme as a whole, he responded by simply saying just give them a low pass grade in order to graduate, and their performance will at some point be evaluated and judged by their unit commanders in the field. The author continued his effort to reform the selection procedure in order to have a better quality intake on various occasions to no avail, and it finally cost him his administrative position as The English Language Coordinator because the vice-president was in favour of the system that was in place, which has unfortunately continued up to the present time. This story confirms the observation made by De Atkine (1999:18) 'that top commanders in Arab military institutions are often unwilling to listen to innovative ideas coming from people working under their command.

3. **English in Jordan:** Teaching English at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University cannot be studied in isolation from the numerous English teaching programmes in the rest of the national universities in Jordan. English has enjoyed an extremely favourable status in Jordan in almost all aspects of life both at the official level and the societal level. A variety of historical, political, economic and educational reasons have

contributed to this favourable status. These reasons include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

- a. Jordan was under British mandate for more than a quarter of a century.
- b. Several important members of the royal Jordanian family, including the last two kings of Jordan were educated in Britain, and two of the four wives of the late King Hussein of Jordan (Queen Noor and Princess Mona) are native speakers of English. It should also be remembered that the present king of Jordan, King Abdullah II is a native speaker of English and his mother princess Mona is also a native speaker of English.
- c. The consecutive Jordanian governments have always supported the teaching and learning of English in all phases of the country's educational system and in a variety of ways and have always shown willingness to spend generously on English education, and at times, went as far as giving incentives for students who major in English in Jordanian universities.
- d. Many of the Jordanians who demonstrated adequate levels of proficiency in English managed to get well-paid jobs in Jordan and in the neighbouring Arab Gulf states. This in turn proved that having a good command of English can be rewarding, and that learning English is a worthy investment.

Moreover, the popularity and the demand for English in Jordan, as it is in most Arab and Muslim-majority countries, have been documented by various authors. The earliest of these studies to analyze the need for English in the Jordanian society was conducted by Harrison et. al. (1975:88) who surveyed various segments of the Jordanian population and found that "Seventy-eight percent of all respondents regarded English as being either helpful or necessary for job success." When asked about the importance of their children's communicating effectively in English, 93% of the 3528 Jordanians surveyed by Harrison et. al. considered it "very important" (ibid: 118). The great need for English and the positive attitude towards learning it have also been noted by Salih (1980: 54-58), who concluded that the Jordanian students' overall attitudes towards learning English are favourable. Zoghoul, (1985: 94) makes similar claims about the widespread need for English in the Arab World: "English is in big demand indeed in the

Arab World. Because of such a role for the language, Arab North Africa is shifting from French to English." More recently, he reaffirms this view on the crucial need for English in the Arab World despite the harms that he believes come with it: "Despite the hegemonic and imperialistic nature of English, it is still badly needed in the Arab World for the purposes of communicating with the world, education, acquisition of technology and development at large." (Zoghoul, 2003: 106). Al-Abed Al-Haq and Al-Masaeid (2009: 296) examined the views and the attitudes towards learning English among four hundred Jordanian university students and concluded that the majority of Jordanians have a positive attitude towards English and aspire to master it. They also identified numerous uses for English that Jordanians hope to achieve through English including preaching Islam and protecting the country from "cultural backwardness" (ibid: 296).

Furthermore, the favourable status that English has enjoyed in Jordan because of these and other factors has been noted by numerous authors including Hamdan and Abu-Hatab (2009:404) who conclude that their "analysis of job ads in 1985, 1995, and 2005 showed that the status of English has been growing rapidly. This growth has been evident in the remarkable shift of the language of job ads from Arabic to English, the clear increase of the percentage of ads requiring English proficiency, and the change of the targeted skills and vacancy type. The growing status of English is also evident in the successive development of educational policies and practices related to English teaching in Jordan." Despite the positive attitudes that most Jordanians have shown towards learning English over the years as expressed in these numerous studies, Jafar (2012: 277) claims that there has recently been a "deterioration in the level of acquiring English by Arab learners, in spite of the growing need for English specially in the modern world of technology."

Because of the numerous similarities and affinities between Jordan and most of the neighbouring Arab, and to some extent Muslim-majority countries, it is worth referring to some of the recent studies which have examined the status of English in some of these countries. In this context, Findlow (2006: 25) describes the linguistic situation in the Gulf Arab states and concludes that in these states Arabic has come to be associated with what she called "cultural authenticity, localism, tradition, emotions, religion" whereas English for the people of these countries is associated with modernity, internationalism, business, material status, secularism."

Significance of the Study. This study derives its significance in part from the fact that it deals with a relatively new experiment of combining military and police training with an academic degree programme in English. It should be pointed out here that academic degree programmes in English have traditionally been the domain of civilian institutions of higher learning. Besides, the study derives its significance from its evaluation of an English degree programme within the context of a military institution bearing in mind that military institutions have traditionally been avoided by researchers due to security concerns, and because of fears of publishing information that may displease the leaders of these powerful institutions which often enjoy unlimited support from the political regimes.

Methodology

Samples: Two samples provided the data that were used to answer the research questions raised in this study. The two samples are described below.

Sample 1: The cadets. This sample consisted of 167 (a hundred and sixty-seven) officer candidates who were majoring in English while receiving practical and theoretical military training and police training. They were aged 21-22 years, and they were all Arabic speakers. Except for one Bahraini, the subjects were all Jordanian nationals. A hundred and twenty-six of the respondents were from The College of Military Sciences, while forty-one were from The College of Police Sciences. All the respondents were admitted after passing the national General Secondary Study Examination known as Tawjeehi. It is important to note that secondary school education in Jordan has several streams, each of which provides the students who qualify for it with the type of knowledge that would prepare them for the university major that they plan to study after passing the examination. Graduates from the Literary Stream were traditionally viewed as the most qualified for majoring in English Language and Literature, but the merit of this view is still in need for support, or else rejection in light of research. Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents across the three streams of secondary education.

Table 1: Classification of the cadet respondents according to the type of secondary school education received

| | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| The Literary Stream (Arts) | 85 | 50.9 |
| The Science Stream (Science) | 49 | 29.3 |
| Information Technology Stream | 33 | 19.8 |
| Total | 167 | 100.0 |

Sample 2: Members of the Teaching Staff at the Department of English at Mu'tah University. This sample consisted of eight members of the teaching staff from the Department of English at Mu'tah University who have regularly taught courses in English language and literature on the English Degree programme at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University.

Instruments and Procedures: The data that were used to answer the questions of this study were collected through a questionnaire and through interviews with 8 of the teaching staff from the English Department at Mu'tah University. The questionnaire asked the respondents specific questions about their experience as English majors at the Military Wing (see appendix for a copy of this questionnaire). The questionnaire consists of four parts. Part one contains personal questions about the branch of military service to which the respondent belonged to, i.e. whether the respondent belonged to the army or to the police. Part two asked the respondents to specify the method that was used by the administration of the Military Wing to place each of them in English. Part three asked questions about the reaction of the student and his parent(s) to placing him in the English major. Part four contained open-ended questions which aimed at eliciting more data from the cadets about their experience with the programme and to get their recommendations for reforming the programme. The interviews with the teaching staff members asked the following questions:

- A. In your estimates, what percentage of the English majors among those whom you teach at the Military Wing at Mu'tah University possess the English language proficiency and the intellectual abilities of a standard English major?

- B. What is the percentage of English majors among those whom you teach at the Military Wing at Mu'tah University, who ordinarily pass the courses that you teach from the first attempt i.e. the percentage of those who pass without having to take a resit examination?
- C. What is the percentage of the English majors who fail the resit examinations among those who take these examinations in your courses?
- D. Do you have any comments on the performance of the English majors at the Military Wing, and on the English programme as a whole? (Yes) (No)
If yes, please state these comments:
- E. Do you have any suggestions for improving the academic performance of the cadets in the military Wing?

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments: The questionnaire and the personal interview questions used to collect the data for this study were content validated by a jury of experts from the Department of English at Mu'tah University. This was done through showing both to this jury of experts who were asked to examine the content and to provide feedback on the appropriateness of the instruments for use with the sample of the study. The questionnaire and the interview questions were found appropriate and no modifications were recommended. The reliability of the questionnaire was computed using Cronbach-alpha coefficient which was found to be (0.84).

Research Questions:

1. How are the cadets chosen for the English degree programme, what criteria determine the cadets intake for the programme, how does the method of selection affect the quality of graduates as well as the quality and quantity of teaching and assessment, and to what extent were the selected cadets and their parents satisfied with the decision of their placement in the English degree programme?

2. To what extent did the academic English degree programme succeed in improving the cadets' English language skills as well as their overall knowledge of the subjects taught in this programme?
3. Did the implementation of the English degree programme in particular, encounter any problems, and if yes, what are these problems?
4. How could the present scheme of Mu'tah University which is based on the idea of preparing an officer, who is equipped with military training and academic knowledge, be improved according to the views provided by the respondents in this study? i.e. what are the recommendations for improving the delivery of the programme and the quality of its graduates?

Results and Discussion

I. Results and Discussion of the Data Provided

by the English Major Cadets

In response to the first research question which relates to the selection system of the English programme intake and its consequences, the responses provided reveal that the cadets surveyed were placed in the bachelor degree programme in English through a method that takes into consideration the following criteria:

- a. The cadets' personal desire to major in English: A hundred and thirty-four of the cadets i.e. 80.2% of the sample indicated that their placement in the English degree programme fulfilled their personal desire to major in this field. By contrast, thirty-three respondents i.e. 19.8% of the sample indicated that the English degree programme was not their choice for an academic major, and that they were practically forced to go into this programme because of the need for achieving a balanced representation of the geographical regions of the country in each academic major. This is required by the leadership of the various branches of the Jordanian Armed Forces. This practical compulsion to major in English has often resulted in placing cadets in the English degree programme who do not have even the basic levels of English language proficiency. The author recalls in this connection a cadet who could not distinguish between the lower case letter d and the

lower case letter b i.e. he did not know which is which. This procedure indicates that the cadets' freedom of choice of academic major is limited and that the cadet intake for the programme includes many individuals who are not supposed to be in the programme at all. Furthermore, a hundred and fifteen of the respondents (68.9%) reported that they did have plans to major in English prior to their admission to the university, while 52 of them (31.1%) did not report having any such plans, which means that they came to the English major because they were not given any other choice. Regarding the availability of self-confidence to succeed in the English degree programme among the respondents, a hundred and twenty-eight (76.6%) of them indicated that they did have confidence in themselves to succeed in the programme, while thirty-nine, (23.4%) of the respondents showed lack of confidence in themselves to succeed in the programme.

- b.** The cadet's score on the in-house English Language Proficiency Test, which as far as the author knows from talking to colleagues who participated in writing it, is prepared usually at a short notice by English language instructors nominated by the Head of the Academic Coordination Department at the beginning of the academic year. The test has not been validated by any external validation body, and the minimum pass score is usually negotiated and decided by a group of officials that include, though not limited to, the Head of the Coordination Department, The English Language Coordinator, The Registrar, The Commandant of The Military College, and The Commandant of The Police College. The pass score for admission to the bachelor degree programme in English is decided only after all the papers have been marked in order to allow for changes to be made in the selection process by important people at the top of the administrative structure at the Military Wing and possibly further.
- c.** The number of officers holding the B.A. degree in English which is needed by the army and the police according to estimates made by the Directorate of Manpower in each of these branches of military service is another criterion for admission into the programme.

- d. Geographical Representation: This means making sure that the cadets placed in each of the academic programmes at the Military Wing, including the English degree programme, represent all of the districts that make up Jordan.
- e. Non-conventional methods: These include methods such as social connections, pressure from influential figures, and cheating on the English proficiency admission test.

Regarding the second research question about the extent to which the programme has been successful in improving the cadets' English language proficiency in the various language skills, and their knowledge of the subjects taught in the programme courses, Table 2 shows the areas of improvement reported by the sample and the percentage of the respondents who acknowledged achieving improvement as a result of the instruction they received on the programme.

Table (2) Areas and percentages of improvement in English achieved by the cadets resulting from the English-degree programme

| Area of improvement | Frequency of positive | Percentage of positive responses | Frequency of negative | Percentage of negative responses |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Learning new vocabulary and terminology | 38 | 22.8% | 129 | 77.2 |
| Speaking improvement | 12 | 7.2 | 155 | 92.8 |
| Listening improvement | 11 | 6.6 | 156 | 93.4 |
| Grammar improvement | 11 | 6.6 | 156 | 93.4 |
| Reading improvement | 9 | 5.4 | 158 | 94.6 |
| Improved knowledge of the history of the English language and literature | 9 | 5.4 | 158 | 94.6 |

| Area of improvement | Frequency of positive | Percentage of positive responses | Frequency of negative | Percentage of negative responses |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Improvement of translation skills | 6 | 3.6 | 161 | 96.4 |
| Improvement of communication skills | 5 | 3.0 | 162 | 97.0 |
| Improvement of pronunciation | 4 | 2.4 | 163 | 97.6 |
| Improvement of dictionary skills | 4 | 2.4 | 163 | 97.6 |
| Improvement of general English skills | 4 | 2.4 | 163 | 97.6 |

As can be seen in table 2, the highest level of improvement occurred in the area of vocabulary. It should be noted that despite the relatively large number of areas of improvement, and the importance of reporting improvement in these areas, the number of respondents who reported achieving improvement in any of the skills and the areas listed in the table did not reach 50% of the respondents which would generally be considered minimally satisfactory. This in turn means that for the majority of the respondents, the English degree programme was not successful in that it did not help them to improve their English language skills and proficiency, and did not help them to become sufficiently knowledgeable in the areas covered by the courses taught on the programme. Additionally, sixteen of the respondents strongly criticized the English programme by writing statements on the questionnaire paper stressing that they learned nothing from the programme. In their responses to the third research question regarding problems and difficulties facing the English major cadets, the respondents reported several problems as can be seen in table 3.

Table (3) Difficulties facing the implementation of the academic-degree-programme as reported by the respondents in descending order

| Difficulty | Frequency of positive | Percentage of positive responses | Frequency of negative | Percentage of negative responses |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Instructors | 32 | 19.2 | 135 | 80.8 |
| Difficulty in understanding some language skills and components | 14 | 8.4 | 153 | 91.6 |
| Difficulties resulting from the improper sequencing and gradation of courses in the study plan | 14 | 8.4 | 153 | 91.6 |
| Pressure, stress, exhaustion, duality of mission and objectives | 13 | 7.8 | 154 | 92.2 |
| Shortage of learning resources and necessary equipment | 11 | 6.6 | 156 | 93.4 |
| Literature courses | 9 | 5.4 | 158 | 94.6 |

Table (3) continued from previous page

| Difficulty | Frequency of positive | Percentage of positive responses | Frequency of negative | Percentage of negative responses |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Individual weaknesses and problems | 8 | 4.8 | 159 | 95.2 |
| Shortage of time for preparation and study | 7 | 4.2 | 160 | 95.8 |
| Insufficient preparation at school | 6 | 3.6 | 161 | 96.4 |
| Inherent difficulty of the major itself | 4 | 2.4 | 163 | 97.6 |
| Lack of interest and desire to major in English | 4 | 2.4 | 163 | 97.6 |
| Favouritism, nepotism, tribalism, and regionalism | 3 | 1.8 | 164 | 98.2 |
| Improper and undisciplined conduct of some cadets | 2 | 1.2 | 165 | 98.8 |
| Parental pressure to major in English | 2 | 1.2 | 165 | 98.8 |
| Conflict between academic and military programmes | 2 | 1.2 | 165 | 98.8 |
| Lack of exposure to English native speakers | 1 | .6 | 166 | 99.4 |
| Frustration right from the start | 1 | .6 | 166 | 99.4 |
| Disorganization and lack of planning by the English Department | 1 | .6 | 166 | 99.4 |

Again it may be necessary to point out here that the small number of the respondents who reported each of the problems listed should not lead the reader to underestimate the severity of the problems mentioned by some of the respondents. The relatively small number of respondents who reported these problems should not undermine the fact that such problems did exist and are real, and that each problem was felt and encountered by some segment of the cadets who provided the data. Furthermore, one cannot exclude the possibility that there were other cadets who faced the same problem but had chosen not to mention it. In other words, the respondents may have chosen to report the problem(s) that they felt to be more urgent than others. In any case, the most common problem, or more accurately, problem area, based on the number of respondents who reported it, involves instructors. Within this problem area the respondents mentioned problems such as rigidity and unwillingness by some instructors to treat the cadets differently from students in the Civilian Wing of the university, incompetence of some instructors, as well as practicing nepotism and favouritism in grading by some instructors. It can also be noticed the problems reported relate to almost every aspect of the programme and the environment in which it is delivered. The rest of the problems are self-explaining and it can simply be said that the numerous serious problems listed show that the concurrent execution of a military training programme and a university-degree academic programme on students who are admitted through a defective admission system will inevitably face tremendous problems.

Table 4 outlines the recommendations for reform suggested by the respondents in answer to the fourth research question which asked them to list the changes that they considered necessary to improve the conditions and the outcome of the academic-military programme of The Military Wing.

Table (4) Recommendations and solutions proposed by the cadets for the major problems facing the academic-military programme at the Military Wing

| Recommendation | Frequency of positive | Percentage of positive responses | Frequency of negative | Percentage of negative responses |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Utilize the language lab and the other learning resources | 37 | 22.2 | 130 | 77.8 |
| Changing the method of selecting English majors | 32 | 19.2 | 135 | 80.8 |
| Giving more time for teaching language skills and reducing literature | 30 | 18.0 | 137 | 82.0 |
| Stop forcing cadets to major in English | 23 | 13.8 | 144 | 86.2 |
| Improved methods of instructor selection | 20 | 12.0 | 147 | 88.0 |
| Reducing the number of literature courses and/ or replacing them with language and skills courses | 8 | 4.8 | 159 | 95.2 |
| Give cadets more time to study and to prepare for academic courses | 5 | 3.0 | 162 | 97.0 |

Some of the suggested reforms such as the first one which calls for utilizing the available language laboratory and the other learning resources give a strong indication that the basic requirements for providing the English major cadets with sufficient and appropriate language input are neglected. After all, for an English language instructor, using the language laboratory when it is available is a matter that does not, and should not need an appeal to top decision makers, since a language laboratory is for the purpose of language teaching. Not so at the Military Wing for most of the

time. The author had personal experience when he tried to use the language laboratory for teaching listening to second-year-English-major cadets in the second semester of the academic year 2010-2011. The difficulty of utilizing the language laboratory arose from the fact that there was only one civilian employee who had the key and who was in charge of the lab. Besides his lack of knowledge and expertise in operating the lab, this employee was hard to find most of the time, and when he was around, he would open the lab room and he would stay in the lab till the end of class period to guard the place. The way he conducted himself during the class period made the place feel less comfortable and less conducive for learning. Nevertheless, this was still better than keeping the language laboratory closed, which he certainly preferred because he could take time off to take care of his private business in the local area. Therefore, this call by the subjects to utilize the language lab is strongly justified and it points to one of the persistent problems in the Military Wing, which, due to the frequent changes and replacements of the generals who run the Military Wing has either evaded their attention amidst the numerous concerns and issues facing them, or has been ignored. The second most frequent recommendation for reform relates to the method of selecting the English major intake from among the nearly four-hundred cadets who are admitted to the Military Wing each year. The thirty-two respondents who provided recommendations in this context gave specific suggestions such as conducting carefully designed English proficiency admission tests under strict examination conditions to make sure that only the most qualified for an English language instructor from among the cadets can be placed in the English bachelor degree programme. Some called for neutralizing the role of interference and pressure from relatives in the selection of the English bachelor degree programme. This recommendation should also be linked with the fourth most frequent recommendation in the table which calls for refraining from forcing cadets to major in English which is mentioned by twenty-three (13.8%) of the respondents. Increasing the number of language skills courses and decreasing the number of literature courses on the study plan is an issue of prime importance for the sample as is obvious from the third and the fifth most popular recommendations in the table. Finally, the recommendation for giving the cadets more time to study indicates that a segment of the sample felt that the lack of time is a serious problem.

The findings presented thus far indicate that as much as the idea of preparing army and police officers through providing them with a university degree in an academic specialization, simultaneously with practical and theoretical military training, is highly desired by both the Jordanian political leadership and the Jordanian people, including the cadets themselves, its implementation on the ground as exemplified by the results outlined thus far has been problematic in various ways. First, there is an almost universal consensus that the selection of the students intake to any university degree programme should be done through carefully designed admission tests in order to guarantee that those who are admitted are standard, and that, with minor exceptions, all will complete the programme successfully within the specified time frame. This principle is not observed in the selection of the English major intake at the Military Wing as is attested by the thirty-three respondents who acknowledged that they had never had any plans to major in English and they did not choose to major in English, which means that they were practically forced to major in English in order to achieve the required geographical representation in the programme's intake of cadets. This is also obvious from the recommendation by thirty-two respondents to change the method of selecting cadets for the English degree programme, and the recommendation by twenty-three respondents to 'stop forcing cadets to major in English.'

The consequences of forcing cadets who do not possess the minimum requirements for success in the programme are extremely damaging to the programme in various ways. First, it means that instructors will have to lower their standards of evaluation, that the instructors will not be able to deliver the required material because of the need for slowing the pace of covering the course material to suit the substandard students. It also opens the door for interference and pressure from the society in the evaluation process. This situation is quite familiar to professors of English who have had to teach courses on the degree programme in English. The author had received calls from high-ranking officers, and from powerful people working in powerful and prestigious institutions for passing substandard cadets who failed their courses; some of whom could barely spell their names in English, let alone know how to read the assigned course readings. Forcing substandard cadets to major in English against their will also cause fear and anxiety for these cadets, and this means that the four-year period that they spend studying degree courses on the English programme will just

be like a prolonged nightmare for them because of the fear of expulsion from the programme or from the university as a whole, which in turn means loss of their prestigious job and loss of their future. Furthermore, the consecutive administrations of the Military Wing have enacted strict regulations governing the cadets' academic standing by which a cadet who performs poorly on the courses, and who fails to maintain the minimum required grade average can be expelled from the university. Nevertheless, past experiences have proved that expulsion from the Military Wing is an option which top decision makers at the Military Wing and at the army and the police headquarters avoid, and instead resort to either changing the regulations, or suspending their application in order to avoid negative reactions from the parents and from the tribes which could endanger the jobs of these top decision makers. Thus, the strict rules and regulations are more often rewritten and more often strengthened than they are virtually applied. The resultant situation is therefore a one in which the academic programme at the Military wing becomes egalitarian in the sense that all the cadets who are admitted to the programme, with few and rare exceptions, eventually graduate with a bachelor degree in English and Military Science or English and police science. This also means that the quality of the graduates from the academic programme will be extremely compromised and that many of those who graduate with a university degree in English do not really possess the level of language skills and the type and the amount of knowledge which is expected from a university graduate with a bachelor degree in English.

The insistence on teaching English to this type of substandard cadets, despite advice from English language instructors is counterproductive to the student, to the instructor, to the national resources, as well as to the army and police units that they were selected to serve after graduation. Not only do these students get the bachelor degree in English language and literature with most of them lacking a satisfactory level of knowledge and skills in this area, but they join their service units after graduation with a great deal of frustration caused by the fear of failure on the study courses that they have to live with over the four-year period they spend at The Military Wing. Many of them also receive official warning from the University for poor academic performance and live with the possibility of expulsion from the university until they graduate. The poor selection method of the intake for the English programme results in what Bani Abdo and Breen (2010: 42) call

"student diversity" which they consider as a common obstruction to learning:

In most Jordanian classrooms where EFL is taught, the linguistic competence of students in the classroom varies widely, but there seems to be little accommodation for the individual learners' readiness for English acquisition. This failure to take individual learner into account is a common obstruction to learning in many classrooms across multiple geographic settings.

The findings also show that there is an obvious conflict between the academic programme and the military programme in terms of the amount of time allocated for each and of because of the scheduling of physical activities which impinge on the cadets' ability to prepare for their academic courses. This is clear from the call for giving more time for the cadets to prepare for their academic courses, and from the call to address the conflict between the requirements of the academic programme and the requirements of the military programme. It is noteworthy here that while the greatest majority of the academic teaching staff with whom the author has spoken to on many occasions complain of the low motivation, and the poor achievement on academic courses among the overwhelming majority of the cadets in all of the academic majors taught at the Military wing, there is a similar complaint from the military commanders about the performance of graduates from the Military Wing in the military field. The author has heard these complaints repeatedly through his close contacts with military commanders before his retirement from service in 2003 and up to the present time by virtue of his job as a professor of English at Mu'tah University in both wings: the Military and Civilian.

Furthermore, based on the results and on the author's personal familiarity with the conditions at the Military Wing since 1990, the problems facing the academic programme also include absence of the proper facilities and the proper conditions for effective learning to take place at the Military Wing. For example, in addition to preventing instructors and cadets from the proper exploitation of the available computerized language laboratory for learning purposes, classrooms lack most of the basic teaching aids and technology products such as data show sets or overhead projectors. Additionally, there are no office spaces for the teaching staff on the military

wing which makes it difficult for them to confer with the cadets and to give them further help on an individual basis. The teaching-learning environment, the military restrictions, and the ignorance about sound educational practices and requirements are all problems that have had a negative impact on the quantity and quality of education at the Military Wing.

II. Results and Discussion of the Data Provided by the Teaching Staff at the Department of English at Mu'tah University

This section provides a summary and a discussion of the results obtained through the analyses performed on the responses provided by the members of the teaching staff interviewed. For the first three questions (questions A, B, and C) the percentage scores provided by the eight staff members were calculated and averaged in order to determine the mean percentage score that each of the three questions received as shown in Table 5.

Table (5) Mean percentage scores provided by the teaching staff for questions A, B, and C

| Sequence | Question | Mean percentage score |
|----------|--|-----------------------|
| A | What percentage of the English majors among those whom you teach at the Military Wing possess the English language proficiency and the intellectual abilities of a standard English major? | 6% |
| B | What is the percentage of the English majors, among those whom you teach at the Military Wing who ordinarily pass the courses that you teach from the first attempt | 83% |
| C | What is the percentage of the English majors who fail the resit examinations among those who take these examinations in your courses? | 2% |

In response to question A which asked the interviewees to give their estimates of the percentage of the English majors at the Military Wing who possess the English language proficiency and the intellectual abilities of a standard English major, the mean score of the percentages provided by the eight respondents was six per cent. This means that only six per cent (6%) of the cadets enrolled in the English Degree programme at the Military Wing were estimated to be qualified for admission to a standard degree programme in English. The biggest majority (94%) of the cadets enrolled in the current English degree programme were therefore considered misplaced in the programme by the members of the teaching staff interviewed. This percentage can also be interpreted to mean that the teaching staff interviewed did not think that the majority of the cadets possessed the intellectual and the linguistic requirements that would enable them to comprehend the content of the various types of materials covered in the programme.

Question B asked the interviewees to give their estimates of the percentage of the English majors, who ordinarily pass the courses that they normally teach from the first attempt i.e. the percentage of those who pass without having to take a resit examination. The mean score of the interviewee's responses to this question showed that most of the cadets (83%) pass the exams given in the courses taught by these staff members from the first time i.e. without having to take a resit exam on these courses. This obviously is a high percentage of pass results given the low estimates of the cadets' competence that the teaching staff gave in their responses to the previous question, question A. When asked to explain this contradiction between this high percentage of pass results and the low assessment that the instructors gave of the cadets' level of competence for the major, the teaching staff mentioned several reasons including institutional and social pressure. In brief, the majority of the staff interviewed believed that there was no point in failing any significant number of cadets because arrangements will be made to secure their passing the course, and the instructor will eventually become the party to blame. The other important factor that has to be kept in mind is that the instructor who fails English-major cadets must conduct a resit examination for the cadets who failed the first attempt, which means more work and more lost time for him/her.

In response to question C which asked the interviewees to provide their estimates of the percentage of the English majors who fail the resit examinations among those who take these examinations, the interviewees indicated that an average of 2% of the cadets enrolled in their courses would normally fail the resit examinations. Again, the small percentage of the failures on the resit examinations shown here is in contradiction to the negative assessment that was shown in the average responses to question A of the abilities of the majority of the cadets enrolled in the programme. It is noteworthy here that the high percentage of success on the courses does not necessarily reflect real academic achievement by the high numbers of cadets who receive pass grades, but is to a large extent ascribable to different kinds of pressure that individual instructors have to face as they acknowledged that in their open-ended comments to the researcher. In this regard, some of the teaching staff told the researcher that instructors who are known to be strict in their grading, and who do not hesitate to fail any student who deserves to fail, are not usually selected to teach courses on the English degree programme at the Military Wing, and are confined to teaching at the Civilian Wing of the university.

The responses given to the two remaining questions (questions D and E) are presented and discussed separately here because these two questions asked for open-ended answers and the responses provided for them are summarized qualitatively.

Question D asked the interviewees to provide comments on the performance of the English majors at the Military Wing, and on the English programme as a whole. The most frequently mentioned comments were the following:

1. Most of the English major at the Military Wing do not take their academic education seriously.
2. Most of these military students come to academic classes when they are physically exhausted, and they do not normally have enough strength to pay attention to what the instructors say in class.
3. Most of these military students are not motivated to study hard because they feel that no matter how poorly they perform on their exams, the administration of the Military wing will pressure the teaching staff to pass them.

As can be noted, the comments provided to question D reiterate much of what has already been mentioned about such negative aspects as the poor quality of the cadets enrolled in the programme, and the lack of time for study because of physical exhaustion, and the poor coordination between military work and academic work.

In response to question E which asked the interviewees to provide their suggestions for improving the academic performance of the cadets in the military Wing, the interviewees provided the following recommendations:

1. Improve the selection procedures of the English major students' intake, and apply more strict regulations for academic performance.
2. Cancel the resit examination.
3. Close the Military Wing and recruit officers from the wide number of university graduates who are looking for work in the job market.

The responses to question E provide practical ideas to improving the cadets' academic performance. As much as these ideas and solutions are logical and effective, they can nevertheless result in the expulsion of a significant number of the currently enrolled cadets; something which the decision makers at the Military Wing have always avoided because of its social and political ramifications. Moreover, the idea of closing the military Wing and recruiting officers from the graduates of the numerous civilian universities in Jordan, as proposed by the teaching staff sample in these recommendations, has always been voiced by many of the teaching staff at Mu'tah University as a way of saving public money, since the annual cost of each of the cadets is around six thousand Jordanian Dinars which come from the tax payer money. Nevertheless, there are social and political considerations that have so far proven that the closing of the Military Wing is a non-viable option.

Recommendations

The conditions of the English degree programme that have been presented thus far suggest recommending a two-track reform plan. The first track involves immediate action to improve the quality of the student intake into the English degree programme, and to improve the learning conditions at the Military Wing. The second track involves establishing independent

military and police academies which have clearer missions, and which have programmes that will turn out individuals who are properly trained for their military and police jobs, and who are genuinely devoted for these jobs. Besides, given the strong likelihood that the conditions of the academic degree programme at the Military Wing described thus far will persist, their persistence will inevitably lead to producing many incompetent graduates, particularly in the academic sense. It is therefore recommended that when they retire from military service and apply for jobs in the civilian sector, job applicants from the English degree programme at the Military Wing should be subjected to careful tests, and personal interviews to make sure that only those who benefited from the programme, and have acquired the necessary levels of knowledge and language skills through individual effort and perseverance are given the jobs that suit their academic specialty. In other words, holding the bachelor degree from this programme should not be considered a sufficient proof that the degree holder possesses the level of knowledge and the English language proficiency levels that are expected from a typical graduate from a reliable programme in the field of English Language and Literature.

Conclusions

The way English is used at the Military Wing as this paper has attempted to show underscores the need for redefining and re-examining the uses and the functions that a foreign language, specifically English in this context can be used to achieve. Besides, the situation of the degree English degree programme at the Military Wing can truly be described as being chaotic. This programme is facing serious problems. In many cases, it has produced mostly young individuals whose chief objective is just to get to the end of the four-year programme as fast as possible, and with the least possible effort for improvement of language skills, and with the least possible amount of knowledge in the academic major on their side. This is chiefly due to the poor selection procedures that have already been described, which bring into the programme individuals who are not capable of benefiting from the teaching provided through the courses required by the study plan.

The future plan that most of them have after becoming officers, as many of them remarked in private conversations with the author on several occasions, is to quickly maximize the economic gains which could come from participation in UN peace-keeping forces and other international missions. The bachelor degree that most of these cadets eventually get does not- on average - reflect any level of knowledge and mastery of English language skills that would normally be expected from a typical graduate from a standard English department. Paradoxically, some of the least successful among these graduates, who could be the most connected socially, politically, or tribally, may end up getting the best jobs in the army or the security departments in terms of financial gains and foreign travel opportunities. On several informal occasions, many cadets told the author that their preferred plan after graduation was to be stationed in a non-combat unit, preferably in an urban location, where they would be able to enroll in one of the nearby universities in order to get an MA and if possible a Ph.D while being in service so as to become professors after retirement from service.

The academic programme at the Military Wing of Mu'tah University, and the chance to study at this wing will continue to be in strong demand by the Jordanian people, especially those who come from families with a history of serving in the military institutions by their members for various reasons, including the climbing unemployment figures as well as the benefits, and the prestige that come with the job of a military or police officer. In this regard, the former vice-president for military affairs, Major General Ma'roof Al-Bakheet, who later served as the prime minister of Jordan for two terms, pointed out in a meeting with the teaching staff at the Military Wing in 1997 that for every cadet who was admitted to the Military Wing, eight others were denied admission. He mentioned these figures by way of explaining how much the chance of being admitted to the Military Wing was desired by most Jordanians. This popularity of the Military Wing has only increased since then. And the evidence for this is that the plan which was adopted recently by the leadership of army, and was backed by the King to close the Military Wing, and to replace it with a military academy that was planned to be built in the district of Ajloun has recently been cancelled under pressure from the members of the military community, both the retired as well as those still in service. The local community at the town of Mu'tah and the citizens of the district of Karak at large have also played an instrumental

role in canceling the plan to close the Military Wing, and in maintaining its current status. These developments seem to imply that the English degree programme is likely to continue as it has always been for a long time to come. It is nonetheless hoped that studies such as this will eventually sensitize the decision makers to the gravity of the situation surrounding the implementation of this programme in to take serious action for genuine reform.

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Appendix

The English Version of the Questionnaire

Dear English majors: The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your personal views and your personal experiences about issues and conditions at the Military Wing, including the process of selecting English majors at the Military Wing, the problems that exist, as well as your recommendations for solving these problems and for improving conditions at the Military Wing. The data you provide will be treated with confidentiality, and will be used exclusively for academic purposes. The questionnaire consists of four parts.

| |
|-------------------------|
| Part one: Personal Data |
|-------------------------|

| Branch of Service | |
|-------------------|-----------|
| A. Army | B. Police |

| Stream of Secondary Study | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A | The Literary Stream (Arts) |
| B | The Science Stream (Science) |
| C | Information Technology Stream |

Part Two: Method of Selecting Cadets to Major in English

1. Did you ever think about majoring in English at the university and did you have any plans to study this major prior to selecting you to study this major by the leadership of the Military Wing?

(A) Yes

(B) No

2. Were you satisfied with the decision to place you in the English major rather than in one of the other academic majors such as Public Administration, Law, Mathematics, Accounting, geography?

(A) Yes

(B) No would

If you answered no to question 2, name the other major that you have chosen to study below, and list any benefits that you would have achieved from studying a different major.

3. Do you have any objectives that you hope to achieve through studying English?

(A) Yes

(B) No

Part Three Personal and Parental Reactions to your Placement by the Leadership of the Military Wing in the English Degree Programme

If yes, please list these objectives below:

Which of the following statements best describes your personal reaction and the reaction of parents to the decision by the Military Wing to place you in the English degree programme? Indicate the degree of your agreement with each of the three statements about your placement on the English degree programme by ticking one of the three choices on the scale:

A. disagree B. Neutral C. agree

| Personal and Parental Reaction | Level of agreement | | |
|---|--------------------|---------|-------|
| | disagree | neutral | agree |
| 1. I wasn't happy with the decision by the leadership of the Military Wing to place me in the English degree programme, and I tried to convince the decision makers to place me in a different Arabic-medium academic major | | | |
| 2. My parent(s) reacted positively to my placement in the English degree programme | | | |

Part Four: Questions about your overall experience

1. What have learned from the courses that you have studied over the four-year period of the English-degree programme? Please list all types knowledge that you think you acquired from the programme below:
2. List the difficulties and the problems that you faced during the period of your study at the Military Wing.
3. Do you have any recommendations for improving the conditions and the outcomes of the academic-military programme at Mu'tah University?
 (A)Yes (B) No